

**Office of Massachusetts Attorney General
Martha Coakley**



Fiscal Year 2011 Call for Applications

Local Consumer Programs

Release Date: March 31, 2010
Responses Due: May 3, 2010

The Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General (AGO) is pleased to announce the opportunity for funding for Local Consumer Programs. Funding is available under the Local Consumer Aid Fund (LCAF), created by [M.G.L. c. 12, § 11G](#). Subject to appropriation, the AGO intends to distribute funding to programs that will provide information and referral services to consumers, and that will attempt to resolve consumer problems through an informal process of mediation by telephone and letter writing. Pursuant to the provisions of the LCAF, sufficient programs will be funded to ensure that each municipality in the Commonwealth is covered.

Funding will be awarded in amounts ranging from approximately \$30,000 to \$75,000, based upon service area, history of funding, and the provisions of this Call for Applications.

Applications are due on May 3, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. Subject to receipt of all necessary documents and reports, successful applicants will be notified on or about June 3, 2010. In the absence of any special conditions, successful applicants will be awarded half of the funds on or about July 1, 2010. The second half of funding will be disbursed in January 2011, provided compliance with all reporting and other requirements.

Qualifications: First priority for funding will be to the existing Local Consumer Programs funded in fiscal year 2010 by the AGO. In addition, applications will be accepted from any 501(c) 3 organization in good standing with the AGO Non-Profit/Public Charities Division and the Internal Revenue Service. Funding may also be provided to local governmental agencies: i.e. District Attorney's Office, Mayor's Office, Town Office of Elder Affairs, or a college or university. All organizations or offices must have been in existence at least one year prior to applying for the funding. The organization or office applying for funding must have a focus on consumer issues. Applicants must accept and implement in full the Guidelines for Local Consumer Programs.

Letter of Intent:

Organizations seeking funding should submit a letter of intent to apply no later than 4:00 p.m. on April 16, 2010. This letter may be submitted to agogrants@state.ma.us, and should include coverage area information, as well as contact information for the grant manager. Submitting this letter is a requirement for receiving funding. Please write the subject line as 'Letter of Intent for Local Consumer Program FY11.

Required Elements of Grant Proposal (not to exceed 10 pages):

- 1. Organization/Staffing & Volunteers:** Give a brief description and history of the organization applying for the funding. Provide the mission statement and evidence of the focus on consumer issues. Please indicate a primary contact person and his or her mailing address, phone number, and email. If the grants administrator is different than the primary contact person, please also include the grant administrator's information.

Describe the staffing pattern for the organization. Describe the duties, schedules, and qualifications of all staff members, volunteers, and interns or students. If paid staff has responsibilities to other organizations, please briefly detail them. If the organization utilizes volunteers, interns or students, please describe how the organization recruits, trains, and supervises these individuals. Include compensation to any staff or volunteers in your line-item funding proposal.

- 2. Mediation Services:** Describe the informal mediation services to be provided, with proposed methodologies and practices for implementing the mediation. Give an outline of the mediation process from beginning to end, including all steps taken and records made.

Include a brief complaint statistics summary, including number of information calls received each month, number of cases opened each month (indicating cases referred from the AGO and cases referred from elsewhere), number of cases closed each month, and number of cases remaining open each month.

If these statistics are not available, please explain why, and propose plans to begin keeping this type of record in the next fiscal year.

3. **Referrals:** Describe your relationship with other consumer organizations in your area and the process for obtaining referrals from these organizations. What number of cases are referred from the AGO each month? What are the top 3 (three) other agencies that refer cases to the organization? Describe the referral process. How may an individual contract your services if not referred by an outside agency?
4. **Consumer Education Services:** Please describe consumer education activities which your organization undertook in the prior fiscal year. Include number of people trained or educated, brochures or other collateral printed or distributed, and amount of time spent in each activity. If the organization was involved in training or educating, tell us who did the training/educating, his or her qualifications, and there was any fee charged. If you did any evaluation of your programs or products, please include a summary.

Describe future outreach plans. You may include plans for which you are requesting funding even if that funding has not been secured. Include specific goals you hope to accomplish, and steps you will take to accomplish them. Provide evidence to support likelihood that the project will be successful, i.e. past success your organization has had, similar projects in other areas, published articles on the method, etc. Include a timeline for these outreach activities, including progress benchmarks and an end date. Include what the definition of success for the project will be. Describe how you will collect data to help support your evaluation of the project's success.

5. **Population to be Served/Need:** Please define the population you intend to serve in the consumer education and mediation services; list the municipalities you will cover. Include any relevant specific statistics. Please describe any special accommodations this population requires. Describe why your outreach efforts are particularly suited to this population.
6. **Responsiveness:** Please describe how the organization will be highly responsive to consumer inquiries and complaints. What is your average time in responding to a complaint, and do you have any data to support this claim? Describe phone coverage and voicemail. Describe any anticipated closures or reductions in service. Are consumers able to contact the organization via email or as "walk-ins?" Does your office make the mediation process accessible to persons with disabilities? Does the organization have accommodations to support any special or vulnerable populations in the organization's population to be served?
7. **Evaluation:** Define what will be success for the organization the next fiscal year. Define specific, attainable benchmarks toward that definition of success. Please outline a plan for ongoing evaluation of the organization's success in mediation and education. Describe how you will collect data to help support your evaluation.

- 8. Budget:** In a separate line item budget, please outline each expenditure you plan to make. Account for any dollar you plan to spend. Also note any in-kind donation and any additional funding sources, whether secured, applied for, or anticipated.

Submission: Please submit your response as an attachment to an email sent to agogrants@state.ma.us, with LCP FY 11 Grant Proposal in the subject line, no later than 4:00 p.m. on May 3, 2010. The response may be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages. Please use 12 point font and one inch margins. The funding proposal and other required forms listed below are not included in the ten page limit. Collateral materials and sample form letters are not required for submission and will not affect the selection process. Please note these materials may be requested by the AGO at any time.

Please also submit the following forms as attachments:

[Commonwealth Terms and Conditions](#)
[Form W9](#)
[Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing](#)

Applicants must complete these forms in their entirety; however, applicants will defer ink signatures until funding award. After successful applicants are chosen, the completed paperwork will be returned to the successful applicants for original ink signatures.

Successful applicants will also be required to complete two additional documents: the Commonwealth Standard Contract and the Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Form. The AGO cannot process payments without original ink signatures on all forms; copies of signatures are not acceptable and will delay payment. Payments will only be made via Electronic Funds Transfer. All forms may be found on [Grant Forms and Documents](#) of the Attorney General's Grants website.

Selection Process: The aggregate funds available to the LCAF will determine the number of programs that can be funded. All applications will be reviewed and evaluated by a committee of staff of the AGO. Applicants will be approved for funding based on meeting the requirements articulated in this Call for Applications. Disbursement of funds may be conditioned upon programmatic or budgetary changes requested by the AGO committee; in this instance, the organization must submit a revised application and/or funding proposal. Funding level will be based upon demonstrated need and past performance, the degree to which the application addresses all requested elements in this Call for Applications, and availability of funds.

All applicants will be notified as to the status of their application by letter on or before June 3, 2010. Information about successful applicants will also be posted on the AGO website, www.mass.gov/ago/grants on or about June 7, 2010. Any application that does not meet the submission requirements may be considered non-responsive and may be disqualified without further evaluation. The AGO may, at its discretion, determine that non-compliance is insubstantial and can be corrected, or that an alternative proposed by the applicant is an acceptable substitute. In such cases, the AGO may seek clarification, allow the applicant to make minor corrections, apply appropriate points adjustments in the evaluation, or apply a combination of all three remedies.

Guidelines: Guidelines for Local Consumer Programs are mandatory. By accepting funds, applicants agree to follow these Guidelines in their entirety. Deviation from these guidelines without prior authorization from the AGO may be grounds for termination of funding. Deviation from the program plans and expenditures outlined in the organization's application may also be grounds for termination of funding.

Reasonable Accommodation: Applicants with disabilities that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of the Call for Applications information in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to Aaron E. Kravitz at aaron.kravitz@state.ma.us, no later than 4:00 p.m. EST on April 23, 2010. Requests for accommodation will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. An applicant requesting accommodation may be required to confirm his or her request in writing to the contact person. The request must state that it is based on a disability and specifically identify the accommodation desired. Although entities of the Commonwealth will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the requests of applicants with disabilities, the AGO reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

Public Records: All responses and information submitted in response to this call for applications are subject to the Massachusetts Freedom of Information Law, [M.G.L., Chapter 66, Section 10](#), and to [Chapter 4, Section 7, Subsection 26](#). Any statements in submitted responses that are inconsistent with these statutes shall be disregarded.

Conflict of Interest: [M.G.L., Chapter 268A](#) (Conduct of Public Officials and Employees) may be applicable in some cases.

Questions: Questions may be submitted by email only to: agogrants@state.ma.us. The deadline for questions is April 25, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Questions and answers in their entirety will be posted on www.mass.gov/ago/grants.